ABSTRACT
The past thirty years have seen a swift advance in the idea of Islamization of Knowledge (IoK) in Malaysia. The term ‘Islamization’ meaning the reform of knowledge in Islam, has been used by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and Ismail Al-Faruqi, especially in the late 1970s, to explicate the process of Islamizing and the reformation of academia in the Muslim world, in the aftermath of the ‘malaise’ of the ‘ummah’. This paper analyses the origin of the IoK as an ideology using a SoK theory proposed by Karl Mannheim (1893-1947). According to Mannheim, the particular conception of ideology is implied when a person is being skeptical of the ideas forwarded by his opponent whether it is an individual, group, or organization. From this point of view, the person’s idea is looked upon merely as a disguise or falsification of his true nature and interest. Mannheim called this a ‘distortion’ rather than simply lies and it can gradually become clear when it is contrasted with the total conception of ideology (Mannheim, 1954). The total conception of ideology for Mannheim is somewhat different in its scope where it deals with the ideology of a certain time in history or a historical-social group and it is concerned with the characteristics and composition of the total structure of the mind of the people or group in this certain time frame (Mannheim, 1954). The look into the questions of ‘What was the reasons for the government of Malaysia in promoting IoK in the 1980s especially during the rule of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad?’ The paper concludes that Mahathir’s Islamization project is also part of his bid to safeguard Umno’s political power by controlling knowledge.

Keywords: SoK, Theory, Karl Mannheim, Peter Berger, Foucault, Hussein Alatas, IoK, Mahathir Mohammad.

INTRODUCTION
This paper analyses the development of Islamization in Malaysia (between 1981-2003) using Western views on the SoK proposed by Karl Mannheim (1893-1947). Despite being introduced by Mannheim, the SoK theory was later assumed and expanded by other scholars such as Peter Berger in his work The Social Construction of Reality (Berger & Luckmann 1991). Another scholar who had a corresponding vision as Mannheim is Michel Foucault in his work Archeology of Knowledge (1972), The Order of Things (1994), and Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison (1977). According to Mannheim, the particular conception of ideology is implied when a person is being skeptical of the ideas forwarded by his opponent whether it is an individual, group, or organization. From this point of view, we are looking at the person’s idea merely as a disguise or falsification of his true nature or interest. Mannheim called this a ‘distortion’ rather than simply lies and it can gradually become clear when it is contrasted with the total conception of ideology (Mannheim, 1954). The total conception of ideology for Mannheim is somewhat different in its scope where it deals with the ideology of a certain time in history or a historical-social group and it is concerned with the characteristics and composition of the total structure of the mind of the people or group in this certain time frame (Mannheim, 1954). Mannheim gives common and distinct elements in the two concepts, mainly because neither of the two concepts relies on what is said by the opponent to understand his real meanings and intention, therefore, to analyze it, we have to look into the social conditions, the life situation and character rather than the face value of the person or group who said it (Mannheim, 1954). The late Prof. Syed Hussein Alatas, for example, used Mannheim’s theory to write his magnum opus entitled Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos, and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism (1977) which reveals colonial ideologies (a term used by Mannheim to refer to false knowledge or lies) in developing Southeast Asian nations. He also used SoK to clarify how educational systems could be ameliorated by specifying the roles of intellectuals in Asia, and how the intellectuals can develop their country.

Sunni Islam: Major School of Thought in Malaysia
Intellectual and religious development in pre-independence Malaysia is closely linked to the development of Islam in Southeast Asia which includes Indonesia, Singapore, and Brunei. It is similar in a way that the intellectual development of Southeast Asian has been characterized by a close connection with events in the Middle East, where Islam originates. This has resulted in the formation of what scholars described as a ‘Middle East – Asia network’ where ideas and religious thought have crossed international borders. The early
background and Southeast Asia – Middle East network had been explained by scholars, such as Azra (2004) (2005) (2006) (Hasan, 2006) (Robinson, 2008) (Hooker, 2008) (Rudnycky, 2009) (Welch, 2011) (Laffan, 2007) (Rifai, 2006) and (Barton, 2009). They have shown how the Middle Eastern network influenced intellectuals in Southeast Asia, especially regarding their thoughts and socio-political surroundings from the seventeenth century until the arrival of Europeans at the end of the nineteenth century. To look at the origin and effects of this network, an essential thing to do is to look back at the historical and socio-political aspects of the region in detail. The introduction of Islam also brings forward the idea of the significance of education. In Islam, education is most important, and it signifies the importance of a person. It is through education, the awareness of the local people initiated which later transformed into the formation of organizations and political parties after the independence in 1957. The next part explains the formation of Islamic schools in pre-Independence Malay amidst the rise of Western educational elites.

The existence of diverse Islamic culture at the start of the nineteenth century can be explained from the perspective of education. Malay-Muslim traders and explorers brought with them the tradition of knowledge and education which was later practiced in Southeast Asia such as the formation of madrasah and pondok (hut) school. The existence of these educational and learning traditions exist in school education maintains a network of scholars between the Middle East, particularly from the Haramayn (Makkah and Medinah) where scholarly traditions led to the existence of Sunni ulama, scholars, and Sufi with Islamic scholars from other places including Southeast Asia (Azra, 2004). The existence of the network is important especially in maintaining the Sunni thought, traditions, and style of education in Islamic schools (pondok) in Southeast Asia. At the end of the 19th century, especially after the Second World War, pondok, Arab schools and religious schools (madrasah or sekolah agama) appeared in many places throughout the peninsula, especially in Kelantan, Kedah, Perak, and Penang. Religious schools or ‘madrasah’ became a suitable alternative to education for the community at the time (Abdullah Alwi Hassan, 1980). The level of education at these educational institutions was normally high…. where many of the students from these schools, for example, Madrasah al-Masyhur in Penang, Madrasah Muhammadijah in Kota Bharu, Kelantan and Maahad al-Ihya ‘al-Sharif’, Gunung Semanggol in Perak still continue their education in the Middle East, especially in Makkah and the University of Al Azhar in Egypt. Even though the arrival of the British halted the advancement of the system in Malaysia, the traditional education system was able to produce leaders in both political parties-UMNO and Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS).

The encounter between the Islamic educational tradition (pondoks) and modern education introduced since the arrival of the British has created two groups of people in Malaya. The first group refers to those who were educated mainly in the Sunni Islamic religion, while the second group receives secular education from Western countries. The latter group of early educated Malays later became the administrative backbone of the country’s government, a small group of Western-educated Malay elite who became Ministers and Prime Minister (after independence) while the former retains its Islamic values. Even though the country was ruled based on a secular nation, a majority of the people still retains the Islamic value through an informal medium such as ceramah agama (religious talks and lectures) which are often held either formally in the media (radio and television) or informally in mosques and madrasahs across the country. The spread of Islam was also assisted with the formation of Islamic political parties such as PAS and non-government organizations such as Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), al-Arqam, and Aliran Kesedaran Nasional (ALIRAN) which helped to spread the word of Islam to the majority of the public. The existence of Islam influenced a majority in the country which was also the main factor why IOK was introduced it was done to gain the support of the Malays and to teach them to follow the authentic teaching of the Holy Qur’ân and the Sunnah according to the Sunni traditions. This is the basis of the IOK project in Malaysia where the government tries to gain support from the people by showing that they are the true supporter of Islam, the Islamic faith, and religion by using education. The next part explains in detail how this is done where the role of Islam in the socio-political scene is discussed.

**Islam in Malaysian Politics**

Malaysia achieved independence on 31 August 1957 in a venture of UMNO, headed by Tunku Abdul Rahman. UMNO tried to show his strength to the British authorities to incorporate the Chinese party (MCA) and the party of India (MIC) for the idea of "Alliance", to maintain the identity of each party in certain things. This alliance was founded based on the coalition of political power between ethnic Chinese, Indians, and Malays, however, UMNO still has the dominant political control of the government. UMNO’s stance in using Islam as a religion is more liberal compared to PAS who wants to create an Islamic state and implement Islamic law. The two groups formed two distinct ideas on how to rule the country using Islam as a
religion. I believe that the difference between the two groups is because of the way they reacted to Western colonization. The Islamic revival started because of pervasive anti-Western sentiment in most of the modern Muslim world, both in the obvious political sense and also in the form of a reaction to Western economic domination, against capitalism and materialism (Nagata, 1980). If we are to accept Nagata’s argument, we must agree that the two groups reacted differently to the negative effect of colonization as explained by Nagata (economic domination, capitalism, and materialism). Furthermore, Islamic education was not a major priority in the educational policy of the British during their occupation. Farish Noor (2009) believes that the discourse and expression of Islam in Malaysia were used to mobilize the masses against the combined threat of Western colonialism, foreign economic exploitation, and competition with non-indigenous and non-Muslim communities. However, Farish argued that different groups and political parties had different interpretations of Islam, as well as different visions for a postcolonial Malaysian state and society. It is interesting therefore to see how these groups in Malaysia tried to formulate their version of political Islam, and how intellectuals in Malaysia tried to blend in their idea of Islamization in the country as a form of utopia against secular ideology.

**Islam and Political Organization**

Since its independence in 1957, the Malaysian leadership has given only moderate attention to Islam as a major force in its fight to win the heart of the local people. Before Malaya was given independence in 1957, people were trying to find an alternative to solving issues like racial gaps and racial tensions. It was at this time the BN was formed (in 1946) which later won the election of 1952 (Municipal Election) and 1955 (General Election). At the time, BN seemed to gain support from the local people due to its multi-ethnic composition which attracted the major races in Malaya, these being Malay, Indian, and Chinese. Other parties such as the Malaysian Islamic Party (Parti Islam Se-Malaysia or PAS) had attracted fewer followers, and thus only won a single seat in the first general election of 1955. However, PAS’s idea of forming an Islamic state little by little did influence the local people, especially the Malays, in later years. How did the local people’s views toward PAS change over the years? This question can be answered if we look back at how PAS developed itself over the years. What follows are the factors leading to the IoK in Malaysia, where internal and external factors combined with the policies of two leading political parties in Malaysia, PAS and UMNO.

As a political party that had its higher-ranking members educated in Egypt and the Middle East, PAS maintains its relationship with the Islamic movement there. Since its formation in the 1950s, PAS was influenced by movements in the Middle East such as the Salafis movement, Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwanul Muslimeen), and ideas from thinkers such as Syed Qutb. PAS also sent students to Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq. The first batch of ten students was sent to Iraq in 1964 when PAS was under the leadership of Zulkifli Mohammad, the Deputy Head of PAS and an Egypt-educated Professor. These students later became high-ranking members of PAS. A year before, in 1963, PAS also sent envoys to the Middle East where the then President, Yusof Rawa, acknowledged its presence as an Islamic movement in Malaysia. When PAS joined UMNO from 1973 to 1977, Yusuf Rawa was appointed as Malaysian envoy to Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkey. His first-hand experience seeing the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979 motivated him to initiate what is called the ‘leadership of clerics’ or Kepimpinan Ulama when he was the President of PAS (1982 - 1988). PAS was influenced by the Islamic revolution in Iran, and later one of its utopian objectives was to form an Islamic state based on this revolution.

On the other hand, UMNO also tries to check PAS’s development by enforcing new strategies to win the support of the local people. Under the first three Prime Ministers of Malaysia, the Malaysian Muslim public was denied the Islamic utopia that they wanted. Although Islam had a prominent feature for the nation due to its history, it only affected Malaysia’s foreign policy and never had anything to do with the country’s internal structure. For example, the first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, with the support of the British, has had a secular ideology in mind and opposed any Islamic ideals and visions (Lahiri, 2009). Among the reasons for this is because Rahman wanted to maintain peace and harmony among the multi-ethnic group in the country and failed to see the universal values of Islam that can be applied to the whole country. Under his administration, he was opposed by PAS and other Islamic organizations in the country, but the making of Malaysia’s domestic policy never featured Islam as a factor. During Tun Abdul Razak’s administration, the policy was changed a little when he established the Islamic Center, which was a part of the Islamic Religious Affairs Section in the Prime Minister’s Department (Lahiri, 2009).
The Mahathir Administration

When Mahathir Mohammad took office as the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia in 1981, he introduced new measures to fight the growing wave of Islam in Malaysia, which was known to many scholars as the ‘Islamization’ period in Malaysia’s history. What Mahathir did at the time is to fight Islam with the introduction of his version of Islam, which many scholars called ‘state-sponsored Islamization. The introduction of Mahathir’s version of Islam was reflected in various aspects of Malaysian public life, societal relations, and economic transactions. Scholars like Valli Nasr (2001), Stauth (2002) and Nagata (1980), to name just a few, had written about Malaysia’s Islamization period focusing on Mahathir’s policy in detail. Many factors lead to Malaysian Islamization, where internal and external factors combined had produced a need for Muslims in the country to participate in the Islamization movements. This is shown in the membership of Islamic parties like PAS, non-government organizations such as ABIM (Muslim Youth Movements of Malaysia), ALIRAN (a non-government organization led by Chandra Muzaffar) and Darul Arqam, as well as the number of people joining demonstrations against government policy at universities such as UKM, UPM, UM, and UTM. The role of such organizations like ABIM, ALIRAN and Darul Arqam is discussed in the next part.

Another measure taken by Mahathir to check the advancement of PAS and to strengthen his ideology is by attracting well-known leaders who can encourage their supporters to join UMNO. One of the leaders is Anwar Ibrahim, the President of ABIM who later became the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia. Shortly after joining UMNO, in April 1982, Anwar contested and won a parliamentary seat and was named the deputy minister in charge of the Islamic Religious Affairs Section of the Prime Minister's Department. In September 1982, he was elected as President of UMNO Youth over the incumbent, thus making him one of UMNO's five vice-presidents; in June 1983 he was made a full minister. Anwar is a rapidly rising star, and many predict that one day he will become Prime Minister (Mauzy & Milne, 1983). In September 1982, Mahathir announced that the government had three major projects; the Islamic Bank, the International Islamic University, and compulsory Islamic civilization studies at the tertiary level (all of which were scheduled to be implemented beginning in 1983).

The defining factor in the Malaysian Islamic project lies within Islam and the ruling party BN in general or UMNO. In other words, Malaysian Islam is defined by UMNO and Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad. In the previous part, I have already explained that the kind of Islam that is practiced by the Malaysian majority is Sunni Islam from the Shafie school of thought. During the rule of Mahathir Mohammad, the Prime Minister is aware that there are elements in the rival party PAS that could be manipulated to show that UMNO’s version of Islam is purer and more based on true Islamic teaching. At the time PAS looks at the revolution in Iran as an inspiration to form an Islamic government in Malaysia. Thus, Mahathir tries to show that his version of Islam is more acceptable to Malaysian multicultural society, against extremism, against Shiism, and deviated teachings based on deviated Sufi tariqahs. Mahathir’s intention can be seen in the way he treats extremists, groups, either in Shiite influenced PAS and Sufi influenced al-Arqam. This fact is supported by Lemiere (2014) who labeled Islamization and IOK as part of the Malaysian government project to counter the spread of non-Sunni and extremists elements in the country. This includes the influence of Shiite which was spread by political parties and non-government organizations such as al-Arqam which tried to promote a comprehensive version of Islam. In Malaysia, only Sunni Islam from the Shafi’i school of law is the only Islam promoted by the religious institutions in Malaysia. Lemiere stated, “shi’a and other non-Sunni and non-shari’e school sects are forbidden and in some cases are considered as deviant by JAKIM which is in charge of regulating Islamic practice and implementing Islamic law and procedure”. For Muslims, their behavior is governed by Islamic law, or shari’ah law which prohibits them from doing any wrongdoings in Islam such as drinking alcohol, proximity, conversion to other faiths which are all regarded as a crime in Islamic law. However, the Islamic rule adopted by the Malaysian government is not based on the original Islamic law or called hudud which is used in Islamic nations such as Saudi Arabia. Hudud was an Islamic code of law that provides punishments such as whipping and stoning for offenses like theft, robbery, unlawful intercourse, drinking alcohol, etc. Even Mahathir himself did not agree to implement hudud in the country calling it unfair to apply these sorts of punishments only to Muslims/Malays. At the same time, he criticizes the requirements before the punishment of offenses such as rape which needs four witnesses on the basis that it is hard to obtain their testimonies (Mauzy & Milne, 1999).

Looking at the political scene at the time, I believe that even though Mahathir is against different standards of offenses against Muslims and non-Muslim, Mahathir is unaware that some of his actions also led to the emergence of different standards of punishments for people belonging to different religions in the country. It
happens in 1984 when Mahathir announced that he would 'Islamize’ government machinery to pursue the ‘inculcation of Islamic values in government’. In 1988 the Prime Minister elevated the power of the Shariah Court over Muslims by adding clause 10 to the constitution providing that the 'Civil courts shall have no jurisdiction in respect of any matter within the jurisdiction of the Shariah Courts' (Kuppusamy, 2006) thus creating different punishment for Muslims and non-Muslims. For example, if a Muslim male was arrested for committing close proximity with a non-Muslim female, only the male will be brought to the shari’ah court to be judged and fined while his non-Muslim counterpart walks away. Mahathir’s treatment of deviated Islamic groups, Sufi tariqahs and Shiite also shows that he is against what is provided in the country’s constitution. To look closer into the politics of Islamization, it is better to look at how the Malaysian government’s treatment of the al-Arqam case, one of the non-government organizations preaching the words of Islam to the Malaysian society.

Another of Mahathir’s acts of enforcing Islamic law in the country is by applying stricter Islamic rules on Malaysian Muslims who must conform to the norms that are defined and promoted by the Department of Religious Affairs, and thus in matters on Islam. The project is called ringfencing the Muslim subject where ringfencing is a result of a powerful Islamic legal bureaucracy controlled by the government (Maznah Mohamad, 2013). Individual rights to freedom of religion are subordinated to the dictates of the state. This distortion of legal interpretation emphasizes the vagueness of Constitutional interpretation and the virtually unlimited power held by the state religious administration over Muslim citizens. Apostasy (murtad) laws as enforced in Malaysia go against fundamental liberties provided by the national constitution (articles 3, 8, 10, and 11). The fact that in most cases the civil courts refuse to opine on matters relating to Islamic belief and practice has directly expanded the power of Islamic courts, such that they can disregard the limitations of Islamic courts as stated in the constitution (Lemiere, 2014).

Even though Mahathir declared that Islam is the country’s official religion and UMNO is an Islamic party but at the same time, Mahathir does not want to change the image of UMNO into an Islamic image. Mahathir still maintains the secular outlook of his party in the face of his Islamic standpoint. Thus, In Malaysia, the religious orientation of the country is neither totally Islamic nor secular but a ‘hybrid’ that includes both (Lemiere, 2014). Based on the explanation in the previous part, it is clear that Mahathir’s turn to Islam is in response to PAS’s campaign to Islamize the country using Islamic law if they succeeded to govern the country. Mahathir’s counteraction against PAS is also done in the global scene where Malaysia took new priorities in foreign relations by becoming more focused on its membership of the Organization of the Islamic Conference rather than the Commonwealth (Abaza, 2003). Moreover, the Mahathir government established major new Islamic institutions such as the Islamic Banking and Finance Institute, the Institute of Islamic Understanding and the International Islamic University Malaysia (S.Y.Guan, 2005) just to show that his Islam is toward development as opposed to PAS.

The ideology of Mahathir with regards to his Islamization project is to help the Malays by using the Islamic religion and at the same time pursue his dream and vision to see Malaysia became a developed nation. However, Mahathir saw Islam and its culture in Malaysia became an obstacle to their advancement especially with regards to the interpretation of the Islamic doctrines (Wain, 2009). Among the problems that were recognized by Mahathir was the tradition of scholarly debates and disagreements in interpreting Islam, which according to him leads to confusion and unwise choices by Muslims (Wain, 2009). To change the situation Mahathir defined for Malaysian Muslims an interpretation of Islam that was meant not only to take care of their spiritual well-being but secure material benefits for them as well (Wain, 2009). Mahathir’s ideology of Islam is linked to the government’s NEP which tries to achieve national unity, socio-economic restructuring of the society, and minimizes the level of poverty. Compared to a traditional interpretation of Islam, Mahathir’s new perspective focused on modern Islam, which is much more open to foreign investment and technology and willing to learn from Western countries (Shanti Nair, 1997).

CONCLUSION
This paper analyzes the government’s Islamization project using the three theories explained previously. Firstly, it begins with the construction of reality based on Berger and Luckmann’s (1967) theory where the explanation regarding Malaysia’s background is taken into consideration for this part. The next section is the analysis of the Islamization project using Mannheim’s theory of ideology and utopia. However, since this paper focused on the role of political parties and the Malaysian government, it only discusses ideology. Finally, the project is analyzed using Foucault’s theory of power/knowledge. This is essentially related since the question of power and its relation to knowledge is closely related.
Berger (1991) states that knowledge comes from the interaction of individual and social structures, such as a society. Therefore, the ‘SoK’ must analyze the process by which reality is socially constructed. He argues that theoretical knowledge is only a small portion of the conception of knowledge in a society and it is not important compared to “the sum total of what everybody knows” about a social world, an assemblage of maxims, morals, proverbial nuggets of wisdom, values and beliefs, myths, and so forth” (Berger, 1991:82-83). Accordingly, Berger seeks to redefine the scope of ‘SoK’ to what people know about ‘reality’ as opposed to simple ideas or ideology (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). Berger develops a sociological theory of what he calls ‘Society as Objective reality and as subjective reality’. Berger tries to explain the process of reality in the real world and inside the mind of a person based on everyday events while in ‘objective reality’ a society is responsible for shaping a person’s knowledge through the process of socialization. The process of socialization happens in a social stock of knowledge which contains primary socialization, where ‘general knowledge’ is acquired, and secondary socialization, where ‘specific knowledge’ is acquired. His analysis of society as ‘subjective reality’ describes the process by which an individual’s conception of reality is produced by his or her interaction with social structures. Berger & Luckmann also stressed the importance of language as a tool for socialization and religion as part of objective reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). The function of religion is to create some sort of curtain for a play where people are transported to another world with a different order than everyday life for a moment (Berger & Luckmann, 1991).

In the case of Malaysia, what happened in the past constructed the reality inside the minds of Malaysians. Firstly, if we look at the idea of a government, most Malaysian Muslims believe that Islam is mostly comprehensive in every aspect and it is important to have a government that used Islam as a basis of its political, economic and social administration of the country. This is clear in the aim and intention of non-government organizations and political parties such as PAS, ABIM and Darul Arqam where they prefer a total system based on Islam to be implemented. Their construction of reality is also based on the experience of living under the colonial rule since 1874. During the colonial period, the Malays maintained close liaison with the Middle East especially with regards to education.

Mannheim (1952) stated that ideology emerged from political conflict, where ruling groups become so intensively interested in a situation that they simply no longer able to see facts which would weaken their sense of domination. Mannheim argues that:

“there is implicit in the word ideology the insight that in certain situations the collective unconscious of certain groups obscures the real condition of society both to itself and to others and thereby stabilizes it” (Mannheim 1952:36).

In other words, ideology tries to stabilize or even out any real fact that threatens to destabilize the real condition thus making them unconscious or unaware of the real situation which they faced at the time. In the case of Malaysia, the group which is most significant to the discussion of ideology is the ruling party, the BN and its major component UMNO and its President at the time, Mahathir Mohamad. By trying to Islamize the country, Mahathir neglected the fact that the country is comprised of a multi-ethnic society where almost 40% of its population are non-Muslims (2010 Housing and Population Census of Malaysia). Mahathir never looks in detail at the reaction of non-Muslim to Islam and their acceptance of the Islamization project as a whole.

Berger’s idea of reality as it was perceived by Muslims led to the formation of two different entities in Malaysia, the Muslim traditionalists who want to uphold Islamic law by aiming at the formation of an Islamic country, practicing Islamic law and Islamic constitution while the second group, the modernist, tries to create a multi-racial country based on modern secular law and constitution. The existence of the two groups also formed two different utopias according to Mannheim’s theory where both aim at developing the country but had a different set of ideas on how to do it. As the group who hold the power in their hand, the BN/UMNO groups has the say in how to Islamize the country where they set their own rules on what defines Islamization if it was to be practiced in Malaysia. Among these are, it must have a Sunni element under the Shafi’e school of thought and not Shiite or other non-Sunni elements which are not accepted in Islam. Another important fact about the Malaysian Islamization project is the use of power by Mahathir to control knowledge. In the Malaysian case, the government control how knowledge is disseminated to the people using agencies like the JAKIM and educational institution like International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) and ISTAC.

This led us to the discussion of power/knowledge as discussed by Michel Foucault. The theory of power/knowledge suggests that knowledge can be gained from power, where power produces knowledge and
is forever connected to it. The power/knowledge theory also states that knowledge is always a form of power and “all knowledge, once applied in the real world, has effects, and in that sense at least, ‘becomes true’”. This is true in the case of Malaysia where the people always look at the government and its agents in determining what the truth is. Government sources are always presenting themselves as the bearer of truth with regard to their information. This can be seen in the formation of legal-bureaucratic government agencies such as JAKIM, JKM and the Prime Minister’s department which tries to control information disseminated to the public and the type of Islamic religion the public needs to know and practiced. Arguably, the Islamization project, as an ideological construct that was introduced during Mahathir’s era is also related to power where Mahathir tries to preserve Umno’s as a dominant Malay party and gain support from Malay-Muslim. This can be seen in Mahathir’s action during his tenure as the Prime Minister of Malaysia. On their 11th February 1993 issue, The Far Eastern Economic Review stated in their article that “in the Mahathir lexicon of politics, power must be absolute” (1993). Furthermore, they stated that Mahathir enjoyed greater power more than absolute, showing that Mahathir tries to control everything including the way religion works in the Islamization project. Thus, I argue that the control of the government is also one of the defining factors that define Islamization where the government tries to sustain power and develop its version of Islamization against external threats. One of the ways for Mahathir and the ruling BN party to gain the support of the people is by attracting leaders of other Islamic organizations.

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